

HAER
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50-OTWA,
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ILLINOIS TRACTION SYSTEM, FOX RIVER BRIDGE
I&M Canal National Heritage Corridor
Spanning Fox River
Ottawa
LaSalle County
Illinois

HAER No. IL-82

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Engineering Record
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
P.O. Box 37127
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD
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Location: Across the Fox River
Ottawa, LaSalle County, Illinois

UTM: 16 E.347060 N.4579280
Quad: Ottawa

Date of Construction: 1903

Builder: Unknown

Present Owner: State of Illinois

Present Status: Abandoned, although presently being
rehabilitated

Significance: In 1903 the Illinois Traction System
constructed a bridge across the Fox
River sharing the piers of the I & M
Canal Fox River Aqueduct.

Project Information: The Illinois and Michigan Canal was
designated a National Heritage Corridor
in 1984. The following year HABS/HAER
embarked on an extensive inventory and
documentation project of the 100 mile-
long corridor. Field work for this
project was concluded in 1988. Final
editing of the documentation was
completed in 1992.

Historian: Gray Fitzsimons, 1985.

As part of the Illinois and Michigan Canal, a timber aqueduct resting on stone piers was erected across the Fox River at Ottawa between 1846-48. The tow path bridge, a timber structure supported on stone piers, extended along the south side of the aqueduct. In 1903 the stone piers were extended to the south to support the multiple steel plate girder spans of the Illinois Traction System's interurban line. The concrete encasing sections of the piers were probably added at this time. Following the closing of the canal in 1933, the Civilian Conservation Corps carried out further work on the piers adding brick, stone and additional concrete to the wing walls and river piers. The interurban line ceased operation in 1934; the bridge has been abandoned since. As a result, the aqueduct and interurban spans are presently in poor condition. The limestone of the piers has greatly deteriorated and sections of the concrete have spalled. The Illinois Department of Conservation has begun to rehabilitate the old interurban bridge for use as a pedestrian walkway.

The bridge's seven piers and two abutments are rough-cut, regular-course limestone capped with poured concrete. The superstructure consists of riveted steel plate girders which support a single track. Total length is approximately 500'.

SOURCES:

A. Berle Clemenson, Illinois and Michigan Canal, National Heritage Corridor, Illinois: Historical Inventory, History, and Significance (Denver: National Park Service, 1985), 1-24, 38.

"McKinley Syndicate Properties of Northern Illinois," Street Railway Review, v. 15 (March 15, 1905): 131-5.

Mary Yeater Rathbun, The Illinois and Michigan Canal (State of Illinois, Department of Conservation, Division of Historic Sites, 1981), 35-7.

State Public Utilities Commission of Illinois, Railroad Map of Illinois, 1916.

U.S. Department of the Interior, Office of National Parks, Buildings and Reservations, State Park Emergency Conservation Work, Monthly Reports for Year 1934, prepared by Theo. M. Kingsbury, Project Superintendent, (available on microfilm, Roll #3, I&M Canal State Park Archives, Morris, Illinois).